



## **2019 FLORIDA CHILDREN'S COUNCIL PUBLIC POLICY AGENDA**

### **Effective Public Policies Benefiting Children, Youth and Families**

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**GOAL: The Florida Children's Council supports effective prevention and early intervention policies and investments that minimize families' long-term dependence on government services.**

#### ***TWO-GENERATIONAL STRATEGIES FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES***

Develop more effective policies for families with young children in poverty by aligning targeted social services that support children's development with workforce development services to increase family economic self-sufficiency.

Eliminate fiscal cliffs that exist in subsidized child care and children's health insurance programs by establishing graduated phase-outs with increasing fee scales for the recipients aligning with increases in household income.

Integrate Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher programing and other housing initiatives with CareerSource Florida's workforce development programs to increase accessibility of affordable housing for families with young children in poverty.

Develop Summer Youth Employment Programs to assist youth in obtaining on-the-job experiences to better prepare them for full employment.

#### ***EARLY LEARNING PROGRAMS***

Align increased investments in Florida's Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program for four-year-olds to quality benchmarks to improve kindergarten readiness and later school success.

Develop parameters for procurement of a VPK pre/post and Kindergarten Readiness assessment that adequately assesses a child's preparedness for Kindergarten across appropriate domains.

Include differential-rate School Readiness contracts with high quality early learning programs in high-poverty areas to increase family access to quality early learning programs.

Increase access for families to community resources through Help Me Grow to support the healthy development of young children.

## ***OUT OF SCHOOL TIME PROGRAMS***

Maximize out-of-school time investments for K-12 students to foster grade promotion, graduation, and college and career preparedness.

Ensure all providers of school-age childcare are monitored for compliance with basic health and safety standards (general cleanliness, elimination of fire or electrical hazards, safe playground equipment, etc.) and clarify definitions of school-age childcare and exemptions (open-access programs, age-based exceptions to dismissal requirements, etc.).

Streamline duplicative background screenings for personnel subject to public school and clearinghouse requirements.

## ***HEALTHY DEVELOPMENT***

Reduce infant mortality and disparities in birth outcomes by increasing the capacity of Healthy Start to serve families at highest risk, including those experiencing perinatal depression, substance use and intimate partner violence.

Support the healthy development of infants and young children by making trauma-informed care services accessible as needed, including services for substance-exposed newborns, and supports related to maternal/paternal depression, and substance abuse.

Develop policy and sustainable resources to support community action teams, mobile crisis teams, and provide mental health support services.

Revise the eligibility requirements and parent fee structure in Florida KidCare to ensure continued access to preventative health care services.

Align state law with federal policies to allow federal reimbursement for access to school-based health services for all students eligible for Medicaid.

## ***CHILDREN WITH UNIQUE ABILITIES***

Maximize the impact of intervention services by managing caseloads and adequately serving infants and toddlers with significant delays or with pre-existing conditions in the Early Steps program which will reduce the need for more costly treatments as the children get older.

Support the prohibition of the use of seclusion and restraint rooms in school-settings.

Implement universal developmental screening and improve the process for referrals to the Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources System (FDLRS) for comprehensive assessment and access to appropriate interventions to optimize investments supporting children's healthy development.

Streamline the transition between Part C and Part B services to ensure families can navigate the changes between infant and toddler services offered through the Department of Health and preschool services offered through the Department of Education.

## ***CHILD PROTECTION***

Support the state's implementation of child welfare funding in the post-IV-E waiver environment focusing on provisions contained within the Families First Preservation Act passed by the federal government to increase prevention services including in-home parenting skills, adoption preservation, and substance abuse/mental health therapies.

Develop a network of high quality early learning programs with practitioners trained in trauma informed care for children in foster care with dedicated revenue for services.

Support young adults who are leaving foster care and are transitioning to independence.

Ensure that children who have been abused and/or neglected are provided with safe, stable and permanent homes.

Support the establishment and expansion of evidence-based programs that promote early intervention and safe, but expedited, permanency for the child such as Early Childhood Court.

## ***JUVENILE JUSTICE***

Maximize investments in youth through evidence-based prevention and diversion programs including those for Juvenile Assessment Centers (JACs) in areas of high utilization, Children in Need of Services/Families in Need of Services (CINS/FINS), multi-dimensional and functional family therapy, and effective girls' and boys' programs.

Reduce the number of children held in detention through increased access to evidence-based diversion programs and promote increased opportunities for career and technical education in the juvenile justice system.

Reduce the direct file of youth into Florida's adult prison system, especially for youth who commit non-violent crimes.

Permit state attorney discretion on filing charges against juveniles who receive concurrent civil citations rather than mandatory filing requirements.

Maximize investments for evidence-based youth mentoring programs to improve youth outcomes and ultimately reduce youth violence.

Support the state's pilots for in-home services as an alternative to detention for youth in the child welfare system who are involved in the juvenile justice system.

## **GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

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Maintain the ability for local communities to determine the best use of resources to develop, implement and administer programs that address the needs of children and families.

Support evidence-based policies and programs to ensure healthy, educated children, stable families, and safe and supportive communities.

Ensure equitable funding for programs affecting children and families that are adequate and respect regional economic differences.

Maximize all available revenue streams for strategies that support child development and economic stabilization.

Support programs that promote family engagement.

Ensure the health, safety and well-being of children in all publicly funded programs.

Support programs that promote the ability for families to continue toward economic self-sufficiency without losing access to services that support children's development.